

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Wooden Specialties

Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana

Wooden Specialties Experiences 20% Production Increase with Lean Manufacturing

Client Profile:

Wooden Specialties, located in Lafayette, Louisiana, manufactures custom cabinets. The company was founded in 1988 and currently employs 8 people. They are a privately owned company with one facility serving the Lafayette area.

Situation:

Wooden Specialties was manufacturing furniture when they began working with the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana (MEPoL), a NIST MEP network affiliate. The company was looking for more efficient methods to manufacture their products and make them more profitable. They began implementing principles of lean manufacturing in the furniture making processes. However, after a marketing study determined that the furniture business would not be profitable for them, they began to focus solely on custom cabinets. The company's profitability improved after this change, yet they needed assistance implementing principles of lean manufacturing in the cabinet-making process. Problems in the manufacturing process included tools that were not properly being returned to the appropriate place and parts for orders that were not well-organized. Wooden Specialties turned to MEPoL for assistance.

Solution:

MEPoL's approach for this project was to lead and facilitate lean manufacturing improvements in the shop area and office area. MEPoL project director Shannon Nunez worked with Bryan Fontenot, owner of Wooden Specialties, to establish a team of employees to identify process steps and prepare a current state value stream map. They gathered data on each process, including cycle times, lead times, inventory levels, machine reliability, change over times and current cost tracking methods. Once areas of improvement were identified, the team worked together to: 1) develop a method for tracking work in process, labor hours and raw material costs, with assistance from Lance Link, a CPA and MEPoL's Coordinator for Analysis and Assessments; 2) make improvements to reduce lead time and identify solutions for bottlenecks; 3) make improvements in on-time delivery and job scheduling; and 4) develop quality check-point tools and methods of measuring quality performance.

Clutter was cleared out of the shop through 5S (sort, set-in order, shine, standardize, sustain) and tools were assigned permanent locations. All raw material was organized and put into bins and storage locations for individual orders, improving accessibility. A scheduling board was designed for the office and the shop, and work was standardized. Quality checks were put into place at critical areas of the shop.

Results:

* Reduced call-backs by 50 percent.

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

- * Increased production by 20 percent.
- * Increased quality of product.
- * Created 2 new jobs.
- * Improved employee skills and reduced turnover.

Testimonial:

"We now have better organization at Wooden Specialties. The employees here see that we are making things better for them and for the company. MEPoL is a good, grassroots program that helps make small businesses profitable and vibrant in the economy."

Bryan Fontenot, Owner